



Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson 18

Constitution Close-Up: *The Constitution says the United States Government must have three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Each branch has its own responsibilities, but sometimes they work together to check each other's work. Let's take a look at each one!*

Today's lesson is about the Judicial Branch: Article III of the Constitution establishes the judicial branch, also called the federal court system. Courts help resolve issues between people, establish which laws are constitutional, and determine when people are guilty or innocent of crimes.

Court System: There are three levels of courts: District Courts, Appellate Courts, and the Supreme Court. Cases start in District Courts, where the people involved share their side of the story and present evidence. Either a jury or the court will decide which side wins. Whoever loses can appeal the case and ask for the Appellate Court to change the outcome. Whoever loses in the Appellate Court can appeal it to the Supreme Court for the final decision.

The Supreme Court is made up of 9 members who serve for their whole life, unlike the President who serves for 4-year terms. The Supreme Court gets to decide which cases it will consider each year. Around 7,000 requests are sent to the Supreme Court each year, and they usually choose about 150 cases to consider.

Sticky Situation: Judges make some pretty hard decisions, and so do kids! Imagine you're at recess and two of your friends come up. They ask you who should get to play with the jump rope. One friend says they found the jump rope first, but the other friend hasn't gotten to play with it all week and says it should be her turn. How would you decide which friend gets to play with it? What kinds of questions would you ask them to help make the decision?

Activity: Lawyers go to Court and try to convince judges why their side should win. The best lawyers know how to use facts and reasons to support their side. For example, if I was trying to convince my Mom that I should get a dog treat, I shouldn't just say, "Give me a dog treat." Instead I could say, "I should get a dog treat because I followed all the rules today, like not barking at the mailman." Pretend you're a lawyer and try to convince you friends or family why you should get a treat today. Use facts and reasons to support your argument. Good luck!

Civic Resources: For more, check out this video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9giPmCWnepU>.